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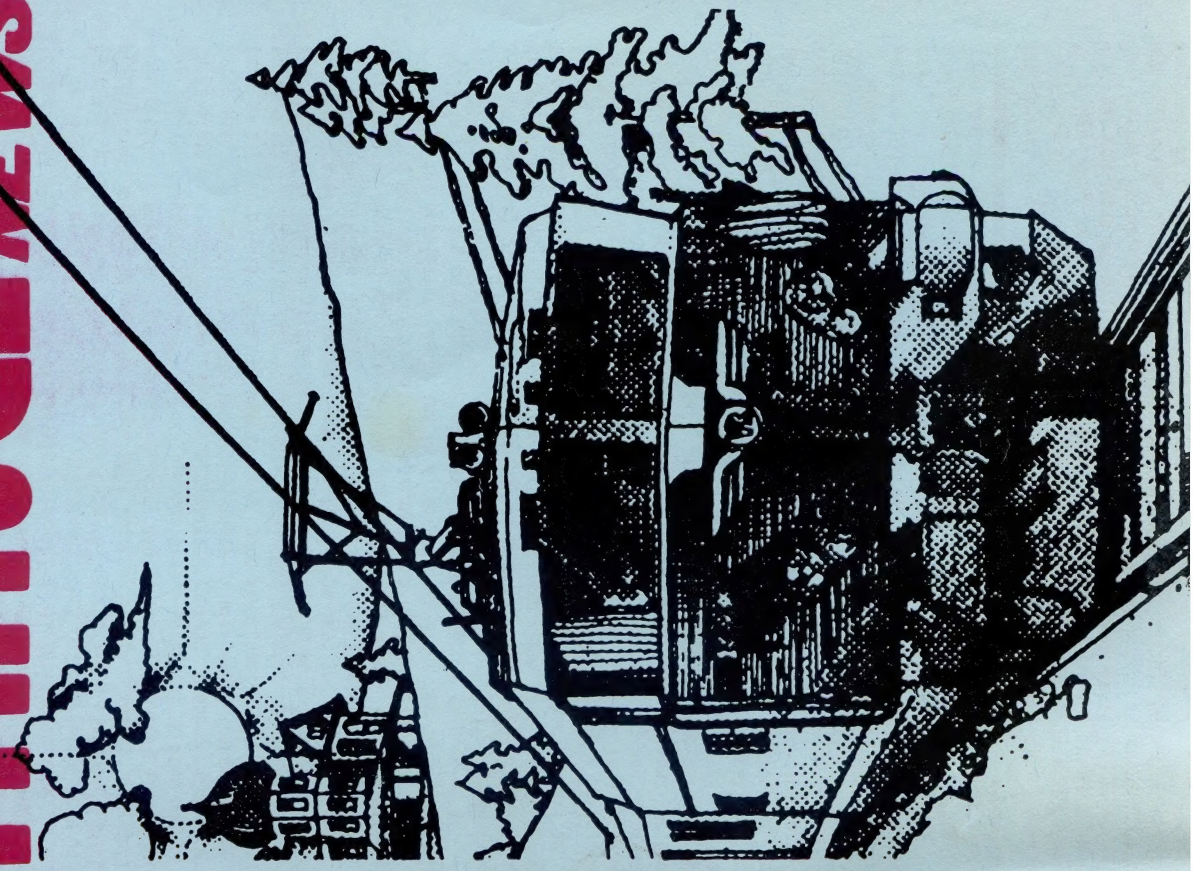
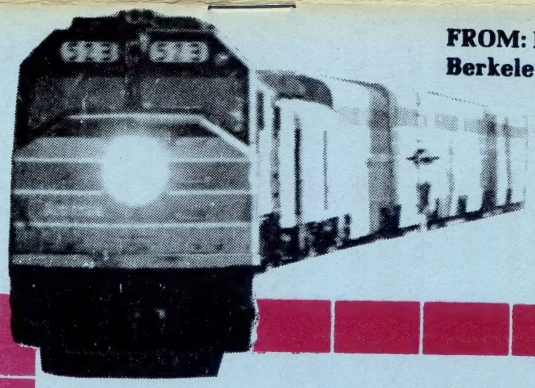
VOL. 11 NO. 19
NOVEMBER 1981
ISSUE NO. 234

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS





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FIRST CLASS

LETTERS

I was very interested in Mr. Shay's article in RTN 231. I do not disagree with the facts he presents, only with the way they are presented. In spite of all the things Mr. Shay mentions in his article, his whole argument boils down to: more people live along the ex-NP route thru Washington than on the ex-GN. The equipment utilization argument is that the same situation would result regardless of how the train is routed, so why bother to change? What's the point? The past few years the EMPIRE BUILDER eastbound was rarely extremely late, and when it was the cause was usually a derailment or something unusual like that. Running via Yakima has nothing to do with this one way or the other, yet Mr. Shay predicts incredibly tardy departures from Seattle this winter. I fail to see why.

Mr. Shay states that he doubts if a 1:15am westbound departure time from Spokane will prove popular with travelers. From 1971 to 1977 the westbound EMPIRE BUILDER left Spokane about 1:30am and, most importantly, via Yakima! Why won't people ride it now? Could it be the 9½-hour "fantastic voyage" from Spokane to Seattle via Pasco was preferred? Hardly. Besides, I doubt Amtrak does much intra-state patronage in Washington, compared to Greyhound, whose service is superior within the state. It's faster, and features a minimum of three trips daily between any two points served by Amtrak (yes, even Wenatchee!). I'm not against going a little out of the way to hit some population centers, but I have yet to ride the EMPIRE BUILDER without hearing someone say, "Why must we nearly hit Oregon when traveling between Spokane and Seattle?" The fact is, if Amtrak operated the EMPIRE BUILDER from Spokane to Seattle via Pasco and Vancouver WA, the run would only be about an hour longer than the route thru Yakima, and in addition hit the Portland Metropolitan Area without having to run a stub train!

Lastly, the population comparison is a cop-out. We along the EMPIRE BUILDER route in Montana are glad route selections aren't made purely on population. Tho the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA line thru southern Montana has a population three times greater than that of the EMPIRE BUILDER route, when it comes to need it is no contest. The train is the only form of transportation here, with few exceptions. Granted, comparing routes thru Washington may not relate to Montana, but I am amazed at Mr. Shay's comparison of population of 330,000 (via Yakima) to 23,000 (at Wenatchee). He states, "Incidentally, I didn't factor Everett into my population calculation. It's only a half-hour or so drive from Seattle, and is balanced on the south by Kent, Auburn, and indirectly Tacoma." It is convenient for him to exclude Everett, because if he didn't this part of his argument would become worthless. There must be over 300,000 people in northern King and Snohomish counties. I'm sure the majority would prefer to board in nearby Edmonds or Everett rather than Seattle. If this isn't so, Amtrak might as well close the stations at Edmonds and Everett. The stop at East Auburn is no big plus for that route because of no checked baggage, and inaccessibility (Have you ever tried to FIND the East Auburn station?). Face it--dumping Everett makes the whole case for Yakima!

When Amtrak chose the route thru Yakima rather than Wenatchee in 1971, there was opposition also. I'm not saying I know the new schedule will be a huge success, but if Mr. Shay's logic was applied to the rest of the Amtrak system, it would be disastrous. Trains would be slow and would run anywhere to hit population centers without regard to other factors. Innovation would be non-existent. I would have been shocked if, in 1978, the EMPIRE BUILDER would have been discontinued and the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA retained, simply because of population. Mr. Shay, give this a chance--it may not even be permanent.

(I favor reinstatement of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA, but if it came to choosing between it and the EMPIRE BUILDER, well...)

Mark W. Meyer
Havre, Montana

Rail Travel News, Vol. 11, No. 19. November, 1981. Whole number 234.
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ON THE COVER

We hear an increasing number of comparisons made these days between American trains and the fast electric trains of other nations. This is especially so now that the French TGV has begun operation, and Japanese engineers are beginning to examine American corridors in order to transform them into Bullet Train-type lines. In this issue we review a book that calls for electrification of American lines and the further improvement of our passenger rail system. With all the current interest in this, we almost turned the review into a mini-editorial. Our cover illustration is from an airline ad--for Finnair. It pictures an electric passenger train of the Finnish State Railways. And it shows that countries with fine, fast passenger trains that they can be proud of use them as a means of attracting tourism and business. (See also in this issue some information on how France is advertising its new TGV train.)

You have done your readers and John Pawson a great injustice by not printing his letter in its original form (RTN 230), thus distorting the original intent to highlignt the woeful level of service in the East and South. I have seen the original letter and I must say that it comes across quite differently than what was printed in RTN.

John Pawson did not advocate adding service in one region at the expense of another, instead he was trying to point out that, on a per capita basis, Amtrak has more service in the West than in other areas of the nation. Mr. Pawson went on to state that any further increases in service should come in areas where the present service is lowest, on a per capita basis. For example, before the current cuts, Wyoming had 18 times as much service as Ohio, based on train miles per capita. Nowhere did he indicate that a reduction of service in the West is in order.

I won't comment on Dan Monaghan's reply since it was based on erroneous information (RTN 232). However, let me state that we in other sections of the country are not out to take away what service the West presently has. Indeed, one could argue that the West as well as other areas of the country are inadequately served by Amtrak. One major question that arises from all of this is when will people learn that the surest way NOT to get more rail service is to constantly be squabbling over who gets what. Instead, we must put aside our differences and work as one toward our ultimate goal: A COMPREHENSIVE nationwide rail passenger network.

Bill Hutchison
Ashtabula, Ohio

(Ed. note: It was not our intent to distort Mr. Pawson's letter in shortening it for publication. Here is the edited-out opening of his letter:

"For a generation, one half of the United States has enjoyed a quantity of passenger train service that has been exceptionally good in comparison to that area's relatively small population and near-dearth of large cities. This area, once called 'the Great American Desert', lies west of an arc formed by Duluth, Lincoln, Wichita, and Fort Worth; and east of the Cascades, the Sierra, and the Gila Valley.

(continued on page 20)

BOOKS

The last book we reviewed here we said we didn't read. Well, this one we did read--from cover to cover, every word. "Train Power" is a perfect book to take along on a train trip and read in spare moments when there is no scenery to watch. This 192-page paperback is particularly attractive physically because of its durable silver cover, its clear, large typeface, and the flexibility of its pages. Main author Ralph Creger put this book together because he is in love with railroads and wants to see them prosper in this country the way they do elsewhere. A visit to Germany and rides on that nation's fine electric trains opened his eyes to what the future could and should hold for our country.

We ran across a line in some editorial material this month (and then couldn't locate it again) to the effect that Germany's trains prospered because people didn't use cars much. Nothing could be farther from the truth! A Wall Street Journal front-page story of Nov 17 points out that Germany, "despite its top-quality public transportation," is in the "top ranks of any world listing of automobile density." It's possible to have fine trains and still maintain a liking for automobile travel. Perhaps there's some lesson to be learned here. According to author Creger, the reason may be that trucks are not so widespread as they are here. "In Germany we saw an average of one truck for each twenty automobiles on the Autobahn. In America the ratio may be about 50-50." That heavy use of trucks destroys our highways rapidly (Creger will give you the statistics on this), and eats into our transportation funds, aside from using petroleum inefficiently.

And energy independence, the efficient use of our energy resources, is the aim of Creger's proselytizing. He makes a strong and interestingly-written case for electrifying America's railroads. Then the power stations that energize the trains don't even have to burn petroleum.

Author Creger worked for the Rock Island as a train dispatcher, having fallen in love with railroading at an early age. He devotes a lot of the book to the Rock Island and the misfortune of its bankruptcy. There's a lot of nostalgia in this volume (along with many photos of old steam trains), but it isn't nostalgia for its own sake--Creger has a way of pointing one's direction into the future and inspiring one to leap up and start working for better railroading. He presents lots of startling facts about the present imbalance of our transportation system and our wasteful use of energy. These are not given in dry statistics, but rather in pithy factual comparisons that anyone will find useful in conversations and discussions with the as-yet-unconvinced. And, according to Creger--and we do not doubt him--"there are many more potential rail-fans in America than one might think. These people are not 'anti-truck,' 'anti-bus,' 'anti-plane,' or 'anti-auto.' They just like trains (especially good trains) and would like to see a revitalized rail system with passenger service which is fast, dependable, and frequent."

The second author, Barry Combs, who as Public Relations and Advertising Director for Union Pacific was recently helpful to RTN in arranging for our reporters to ride the press run of the 8444 and 3985 steam locomotives as they began their run to California for the Sacramento Railfair (see RTN 222), is equally eloquent, and tho his railroad position does not permit him to be as sanguine about the passenger train as Creger is, he makes a persuasive case, again complete with many startling comparisons ("...railroads carry about 60 percent, trucks about 40 percent (of the nation's intercity freight). But to do it trucks burn 25 percent of all fuel used in transportation. Railroads use 3 percent.").

Think of how even that low fuel bill would be reduced with electrification! This is a book to give as a gift to your Congressman or a friend who needs to be convinced--or merely informed. One nice thing about buying this book is that one can at the same time help support MOKSRail, the Missouri/Kansas Rail Passenger Coalition, as noted in an ad in our last issue. The price is $9.95 plus $1 post. & hdlg. from MOKSRail, PO Box 1192, Kansas City MO 64141. Otherwise, the publisher is Independence Press, Drawer HH, Independence MO 64055.

AMTRAK BUDGET CUTS COULD COME IN DECEMBER

Amtrak's budget--and the entire federal budget--are still up in the air as of late November. President Reagan on Nov 23 vetoed a bill that included no further cuts for Amtrak, and which included wording that would have reinstated the CARDINAL. Following this veto, the first of Reagan's administration, a continuing resolution was passed that keeps the government in operation thru Dec 15, as the previous levels. Reagan wants a 5% across-the-board spending cut, and in the merry-go-round of activity before the Thanksgiving recess Amtrak came close to getting a 4% cut: Senator Baker on Nov 20 pushed a bill thru the Senate that cut Amtrak 4% and in addition allowed the administration to make individual cuts up to 5%. If this bill had gotten thru Congress in its original form, it would have meant that 15% of non-Northeast Corridor train miles would be eliminated from the Amtrak system. Since the final budget is still unsettled, there remains the possibility that Amtrak could still be hit by such cuts after Dec 15.

What would another 15% cut mean? The National Association of RR Passengers speculates that the routes in greatest jeopardy are the CRESCENT, the SUNSET LIMITED, the EAGLE, the Chicago-Indianapolis and Washington-Newport News short distance trains, and at least one daily roundtrip each from the Chicago-Detroit and New York-Niagara Falls routes. However, later NARP said that 15% might be saved by reducing the following trains to tri-weekly operation: the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, DESERT WIND, PIONEER, SOUTHWEST LIMITED, and CRESCENT. Such a move would kill the mail contracts on these trains.

NARP said that thanks are due to Senator Mark Andrews and Representative Adam Benjamin, who spared Amtrak from further cuts in the continuing resolution. There was a small cut in the NE Corridor improvement program, and the DOT overall budget was cut more than the 2% that was expected.

The fight for the Amtrak budget resumes in early December. NARP is urging rail supporters to call their senators and representatives (call 202-224-3121 and ask for the office of one's senator or representative). Sen. Robert Packwood of Oregon twice attempted to insert kill-the-CARDINAL language in the budget, and NARP expects him to try a third time in early December. In a Nov 18 letter to Packwood, Amtrak President Alan Boyd said "Four trains would have to be cut during the remaining 9 months of the fiscal year to obtain savings equivalent to a full year's savings of three trains." He also noted that "...any reduction in the system being operated today would result in the elimination of routes contributing to our goal of recovering 50% of our losses thru revenues by the end of next year. Any reductions will result in lost jobs and further increases in Amtrak labor protection expenses."

RAIL CANADA

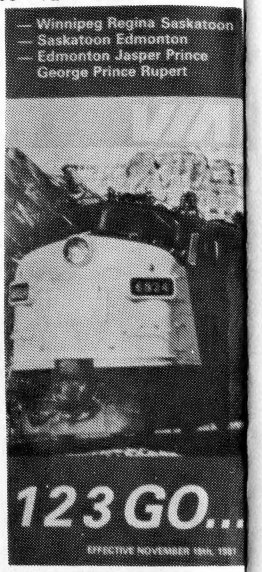
VIA RAIL TRAINS ARE CUT; SUPPORTERS VOW TO FIGHT ON

As planned by the Ministry of Transport, twenty percent of the VIA Rail system was lost this month. On Nov 14 the last runs of several trains left their points of origin, including the SUPER CONTINENTAL and the ATLANTIC.

Opposition to the VIA cuts has not ceased, however. Joe Clark, national leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, told his national convention at Fredericton, N.B. on Nov 21 that if elected his party would restore the ATLANTIC. He said the massive layoffs of VIA Rail workers hurt New Brunswick especially hard. The VIA issue will likely be included in the Tory election platform during the next federal election in two years.

THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT was taking CP, CN, VIA and the federal government to court on Nov 23, based on a service guarantee on Montreal-Mt. Laurier, Montreal-Lachute-Hull/Ottawa CP lines; the CP lines are protected under a sale agreement to CP in 1882, which was voted into law, federal and provincial.

TRANSPORT 2000 PREDICTS a dismal future for the VIA substitute services such as Winnipeg-Saskatoon (very slow) and Ottawa-Sudbury (tri-weekly, unadvertised). T-2000 calls these services "stage furniture", designed to make people think the reductions are not so severe after all. Pepin has threatened to remove further service in the futureif it is not used adequately. These "lame duck" substitutes seem likely to be included in future cuts.



VIA RAIL CANADA issued a blue and yellow folder for the substitute Western services dated Nov 15 (pictured here). An Eastern Corridor timetable was issued Oct 25, plus a second edition about Nov 15 that corrects some errors in the earlier one. In addition, a new system timetable was published for the Nov 15 changes. We have not seen it, but it carries a picture of the CANADIAN at Field BC on its cover.

THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT raised gasoline taxes 20% in the midst of the train cutbacks, with the idea of urging people to use public transport more widely. Canada's energy crisis is just starting, notes a newspaper article this month. Large price increases for petroleum products are only now hitting Canada.

TWO VIA TRAINS on the Cochrane-Montreal line were blocked by protestors demonstrating against the impending train cuts. The train that left Senneterre Nov 11, due to arrive Montreal the next morning, was blockaded at Parent by sand and debris placed on the track. The northbound train and two freights were also blocked. The protestors took passengers into their homes and cared for them until the track was cleared. The Montreal-bound train was blocked similarly a second time when it reached Sanmaur, this time by members of an Indian reserve who were protesting the cut of the train from six times weekly to tri-weekly. VIA sent a locomotive and sleeping car to pick up the passengers this time, and they arrived at Montreal 53 hours late, on Nov 21. Transport Minister Pepin agreed to meet with the Indians about their concerns over adequate transportation, especially for emergency situations. The blockade at Parent was the second one of the month; a similar demonstration took place the night of Nov 2-3.

A PROTEST TRAIN, called the "Spirit of '35," a reference to an earlier depression year, brought demonstrators from Vancouver to Ottawa this month. The train, the CANADIAN, left Vancouver Nov 16 for the national capitol, where 70,000 citizens protested high interest rates.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

SAN JOSE STREETCARS: The development of the Guadelupe Corridor, paralleling the Guadelupe River, got a boost Nov 16 when Santa Clara County supervisors approved a plan for a 20-mile long light rail line that would start near Marriott's Great America and run south to the IBM plant, passing thru the civic center and a proposed transit mall. Building should start in 1984 and take two years. The cost is estimated at $268 million in 1980 dollars. UMTA reportedly has approved $100 million of the funding, with the rest to come from local sources. A new freeway and bicycle lanes are included in the project.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY chose Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Quade and Douglas-Kaiser Engineers to do a $90,000 engineering consultant job on the proposed L.A. to Long Beach trolley line. The State Dept. of Transportation was one of the bidders, but lost out. The L.A. County Transportation Commission felt that an outside, objective view of the project was important.

THE BENDABLE BUS is becoming increasingly popular with U.S. transit systems for its extra capacity and thus lower operating costs. The Rochester NY transit system is the latest to consider such vehicles. On Dec 1 and 2 such a bus was visiting the city for a demonstration and display. Rochester's bus is made by Ikarus Body and Coach Works of Budapest, Hungary, the largest manufacturer of articulated buses, while it is assembled and marketed by Crown Coach Corp. of Los Angeles. The M.A.N., a U.S. company owned by West German interests, opened a plant in Cleveland NC on Nov 7. It holds orders for 635 vehicles from eleven transit systems. General Motors will have an articulated bus on the market in 2½ years. The Atlanta system is buying 46 vehicles from Neoplan USA Corp. of Lamar CO, a German-owned firm. Portland OR and Louisville KY will get the Ikarus machines. Volvo has been showing a model in the U.S., and Saab-Scania is getting into the business soon. Seattle has ordered 202 M.A.N. buses, already owning 150 of them.

FREE BUS SERVICE is offered by Rochester NY during the Christmas shopping season.

TRAINING TRANSIT MANAGERS will be done under a new UMTA program under which 80% of trainees' costs are paid by the DOT. Eleven instituttions were chosen for the program, according to an announcement Nov 18. Interested persons can contact UMTA's Brian Cudahy at 202-426-4043.

SOUTH SHORE RAILROAD is having its administration taken over by the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, after the announcement Nov 20 that the District reached an operating assistance agreement with the railroad. The first of 36 new coaches for the railroad should appear next September if plans stay on schedule.

SAN FRANCISCO MUNI should have its bus shortage problem fixed by the end of the year, according to reports (over half its buses are generally out of service). The situation is bad enough to prompt the San Francisco Examiner to editorialize (Nov 1) "The shape into which Muni has sunk is enough to induce a mass hand-wringing..." Spare buses have been leased from Los Angeles, and some bus engines are being shipped to Chicago for repair.

THE PARKWAY LIMITED commuter train made its last Pittsburgh-Greensburg PA runs on Nov 13, and is replaced by buses. The train failed to attract enough riders to justify its existence.

THE BUDD COMPANY in mid-November unveiled a "skytrain" magnetic levitation rail vehicle that it will build under contract to a West German firm. Budd also recently contracted to build three 10-car people movers for the Miami zoo.

A BRITISH RAILBUS has been purchased by the DOT for test trials. The railbus is built jointly by British Rail and British Leyland, but it has not as yet been used in England because British Rail has not yet been able to agree to try the machine, fearing that its rail image will be tarnished if it does so.

NORTH JERSEY COAST line has gray catenary supports all up in the Matawan area, and a new parking lot is being built. The electric extension South Amboy to Matawan is expected to become operational by the end of the year.

THE CABLE CARS of San Francisco got another $6 million federal grant for their rebuilding effort, it was announced Nov 16.

SOUTHERN PACIFIC AND the Sacramento Regional Transit District are disagreeing over the purchase price of an abandoned 9.1-mile right of way the District wants to use for running light rail excursions from the new state Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento. SP wants a minimum of $6.5 million, the District says $2.2 million.

(continued on page 11)

LAST RIDE ON THE ATLANTIC

The ATLANTIC LIMITED, Canadian Pacific's flagship to the Maritimes, survived everything except Canada's current Minister of Transport. In the 1960's and 1970's, CP neglect reduced the service to a four-car train which often carried less than ten passengers, yet provided the only dome car service in the far East, and a very efficient dining operation, in which three men provided a variety of hot meals and ran a full bar with seat service in the lounge. In the late 1970's, Transport Minister Otto Lang tried to persuade the Maritimes to have the train discontinued in return for bus and air service, but the Maritimes rejected the proposal, and the ATLANTIC became the backbone of VIA's Eastern service as the SCOTIAN was discontinued and the OCEAN downgraded.

Now, Transport Minister Pepin has learned the lesson Lang was taught, and did not give the Maritimes any choice, but unilaterally discontinued the train, despite its heavy passenger loads, which are heavier than any time in the last 20 years. Pepin did not dare allow the Maritimes to decide whether they wanted the service discontinued.

On-board service has always been VIA's strong point, and this was apparent as I boarded the ATLANTIC recently in Montreal. Sleeping cars were open a full hour before departure, a member of the diner crew was at the conductor's check-in desk offering dinner reservations, and the lounge was open from boarding time, with the single barman providing efficient service to passengers' seats in the lounge. The heavy sleeper business that is common on Canadian long-hauls was apparent, as four sleepers, including CP "Cornwall Manor"--unrefurbished--, brought up the rear of the train, but there were only four coaches ahead. Between was a diner and full lounge, and a coach cafe-lounge was amidst the coaches. The load was 222, of which 90 were in sleepers.

The early boarding meant ample time to be settled in my roomette and enjoy a leisurely drink--altho expensive ($3.25 Canadian)--in the lounge before the first call to dinner a few minutes before departure. The diner filled quickly as we slid across the St. Lawrence River. Altho we are on CN tracks to Lennoxville, a CP train crew will take us all the way to Megantic.

Service in the diner was quick and efficient, altho again the prices are high. It is hard to get a full meal for less than $10 Canadian. VIA seems to have chosen to raise prices rather than cut service, and the policy seems to work: there was no lack of business in either lounge or diner.

In an hour I returned to my roomette, just as we left CN's Maritimes mainline at St. Rosalie Jct. and turned southeast on the Grand Trunk line to Portland. This line had for many years only been served by the commuter train to Sherbrooke, and a long passenger train--doomed to be a three-year aberration--is still unusual in the villages along the route.

Arrival at Sherbrooke's CN station was a few minutes late. Here we changed our CN engine crew for a CP one, and then sat for an hour. It turned out the steam generator was not working well, but at 10:01pm, 64mins late, it was fixed and gave no further problems. We then went south, still on CN, three miles to Lennoxville, where the CP main crossed. After the inevitable backup move, we headed east on CP's very smooth track. Trouble soon developed, however, as it turned out that a freight with sticking brakes was in front of us. Departure from Megantic was at 12:15am, 55mins late, but long waits in the middle of nowhere resulted in 80mins late by Jackman, where we stopped for 13mins to allow U.S. customs to walk the train and inspect any passengers detraining in Maine. By Greenville we were 93 mins late, and 108mins late at Brownville Junction. No one seemed to know why we were not allowed to pull around the freight until Brownville Junction.

LIMITED by Duane W. Roller

Northern Maine, which has now lost its last passenger service, is very rural and isolated. Yet there were a number of passengers at each of the stops. I was interested to note that there was no indication of VIA's presence at any of the stations--it appeared to be all CP.

At Vanceboro, U.S. customs came back on to check out the train, and then we pulled across the St. Croix River to McAdam, where Canadian customs walked the train and watches were set up to Atlantic Time. By now we were 119mins late.

Breakfast was pleasant and efficient, altho there was no grapefruit available because the car could not carry it thru the U.S. Within two hours, St. John came in view and we passed CP's yard office, five miles out of town and for many years the terminal of this train. As we crossed the viaduct over the St. John River, Reversing Falls was in the process of reversing, as the tide was coming in from the Bay of Fundy, forcing the waters upstream. Then it was St. John's nice new passenger station, opened recently on the site of old St. John Union Station, and now destined to become a white elephant served only by one RDC service.

A CN crew took over, servicing was quick, and departure was 88mins late. Fast running along CN's excellent track to Moncton caused arrival at this transportation center only 73mins late, and then it was a pleasant ride along the tidal flats at the head of the Bay of Fundy to Truro, my destination, 53mins late. I was to ride the RDC out to Sydney and back before returning home.

That this crowded, popular train--I rode it on an off-season day when patronage was very low, yet constantly over 200 passengers--is to be discontinued as unneeded boggles the mind. Yet, I suppose this is the way of the world for the anti-railroad transportation departments of both the U.S. and Canada. People have refused to be convinced that they don't need their trains, so Canada has hit on an ingenious solution: just take the trains off. Don't hold hearings, don't allow Parliament to intervene, for that might (and has so often in the past) allow the train to stay. Just take it off. I expect Drew Lewis is envious of Jean-Luc Pepin.

★ TED BLISHAK INTERVIEWS CALTRANS DIRECTOR ADRIANA GIANTURCO -- Oct 22 on the inaugural press run of the Sacramento-L.A. overnight train

Q: Congratulations on your successful efforts to get another new train started in California. What is the status of the proposed DEL MONTE between the Bay Area and Monterey? Will that be the next new Caltrans/Amtrak train?

A: Caltrans has just completed a report on that proposal, which I'm not really up on just yet. But I'm in favor of it--if we can get the money for it, we'll go ahead with the DEL MONTE!

Q: I have listened to many complaints from Amtrak passengers about the poor quality of food and food service aboard Amtrak trains this summer. Does Caltrans have any say in the matter of how food service is handled aboard trains which are subsidized by the state of California?

A: No, the food service is entirely out of Caltrans's hands; we have to accept whatever food service Amtrak is willing and able to offer aboard state-subsidized Amtrak trains. Altho I am aware that there are some limitations to the food service aboard this train, the state at this time is just happy to have the train at all after a year and a half of arbitration!

Q: We arrived into Sacramento last night aboard the Amtrak bus connection from the STARLIGHT at Davis, and noticed a pencilled sign in the station at Davis that

the bus service will be cancelled Oct 25. Do you know the reason for this?

A: The service was just not cost-effective. Amtrak was chartering the bus, but the number of passengers that it generated was just not sufficient to support the service (according to the bus driver, his average load was about 9-10 passengers).

Q: Altho the new overnight train will now give daily service between Sacramento and the Bay Area in lieu of the Davis bus connection, one train a day is still quite limited. How soon do you see the STARLIGHT being re-routed via Sacramento?

A: The state has wanted this for a long time, but could not reach an agreement with SP. SP wanted Caltrans to pay the costs of considerable trackwork in the Roseville vicinity before allowing the STARLIGHT to be re-routed. We did not think this work was necessary, and the case is now in arbitration.

Q: Does Caltrans have a target date in mind for the re-routing?

A: We wanted it as soon as possible, and had hoped for Oct 25, but now that the case is in arbitration, it is entirely out of our hands. We have no idea how long this process will take. For example, there are three arbitrators; one has just taken a 6-week vacation, which will delay the process until he returns. To give an idea of how long the process has taken in the past, the arbitration process for the train we are riding on today took one and one half years!

Q: The Caltrans/SP peninsula commute service between San Francisco and San Jose has just announced a schedule revision effective Oct 25. Was Caltrans instrumental in making this change, and what factors were involved in the decision?

A: The primary factor was to offer additional southbound service for "reverse" commuting, S.F.-San Jose direction, as we feel there is a growing market for San Francisco residents who work on the peninsula. The secondary factor was to allow for more convenient connections for Amtrak trains in S.F. and San Jose.

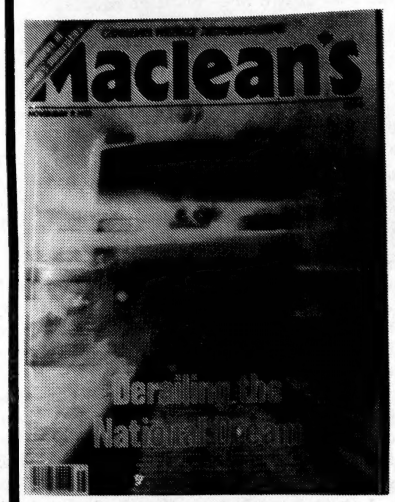
BEHIND THE CANADIAN TRAIN CUTS
by Duane W. Roller

Many people on both sides of the border are astounded at the Canadian government's policy regarding VIA Rail. Canada has always seemed a place where the passenger train flourished. But some peculiarities of the Canadian parliamentary system, skillfully exploited by the Liberal government, have made it possible for that government to discontinue at a stroke, without legislative approval, twenty percent of the national rail system.

In the United States, Congress has always tended to protect the interests of the rail passenger against the attempts by the executive branch of the government to destroy the system. Moreover, Congress protected Amtrak from itself and its weak leadership of its early days. But in Canada, where the parliamentary system merges executive and legislative branches of government, no such check and balance is possible. It is as if Drew Lewis had sole authority to determine the Amtrak route structure (remember the Brock Adams route map of 1979 with its "one train serves everywhere" scheme?). Like his American counterparts, Minister of Transport Pepin has put forth a route structure. But since Pepin is also a member of the legislature--an elected Member of Parliament--he can control the legislative reaction to the route structure.

Moreover, the House of Commons, for historical reasons, is structured in such a way as to give Ontario and Quebec more members than their population requires. Since Ontario and Quebec are the only areas of Liberal Party strength, this gerrymandering ensures a Liberal government, and the West, where the cuts are by and large taking place, is not only totally disenfranchised (there is no Liberal member west of Winnipeg) but unable to do anything about it. It is as if Drew Lewis were a member of the majority party in Congress and sat in that body. The minority would be unable to oppose his transportation policy; legislative would simply be an arm of the executive.

And it is all perfectly legal. The Liberal party, because of the over-representation in Ontario and Quebec, is firmly in control, elections need not be called for over two years, and there is nothing the Conservatives can do about it except persuade Liberal members to defect from their party, an unlikely possibility since party loyalty is valued highly. Despite a recent poll which showed Quebec was the only province which supported the Liberal government--Ontario was split--the majority in the House of Commons is strong enough to assure the impotence of the minority.



In a major cover story in its Nov 9 issue, Canada's widely-read newsmagazine Maclean's set down for all to read the whole ghastly story of how a single Canadian minister could discontinue one-fifth of the entire VIA passenger train system. "Derailing the National Dream" read the cover caption. The article, "Why you can't get there from here" by David Thomas was thoughtful and comprehensive. It pointed up the fact that VIA Rail has no legal foundation, being set up by the Transport Ministry and not by any act of Parliament. It is such a legal Act that VIA needs in order to avoid future strangulation at the hands of the MOT. VIA president Frank Roberts would like such a legal status too, to protect VIA from overcharging by the railways and to give passenger trains other rights. Perhaps this year's disaster will be a catalyst to action by Parliament on this matter.

Furthermore, because only the disenfranchised minority party is supportive of passenger trains, VIA Rail's weak leadership--reminiscent of the Roger Lewis days at Amtrak--has no element of the government encouraging it to clean up its act. In fact, the so-so leadership at the top in VIA is skillfully used by the government to ensure the success of government transportation policy.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from page 7)

NEW YORK STATE legislator this month proposed that three separate boards be created to run New York's subways and its commuter railroads because the "MTA can no longer handle the problem alone."

NEW YORK MAYOR Koch has been trying to get more involved in the city's transit system--he calls transit a top priority in his administration. In late November he announced he would appoint a special assistant for transportation. Koch has come to loggerheads with MTA Chairman Richard Ravitch, and wants legislation to allow him to hire and fire the Transit Authority head.

NEW YORK CITY Board of Estimate members are going to the state supreme court to argue that they and not Mayor Koch have the legal right to make decisions on the proposed Westway highway project in the city.

NOTE TO READERS: This will be the only issue dated November. The next two issues will be dated December, to allow us to catch up with our cover dating and start the new year with the First Issue of January. This will not affect the number of copies you receive on your subscription.

BERKSHIRES TO BAY AREA: A TRANSCONTINENTAL TRAIN TRIP ON HERITAGE FLEET AND SUPERLINERS

by Kevin Gregoire

The NARP Board of Directors meeting in San Francisco on Oct 8-10 provided a perfect excuse for a transcontinental rail trip to try out Amtrak's latest equipment and meal service.

In order to reach California on Oct 8, I had to leave Pittsfield MA on Oct 5. I left my house about 8:30 that evening and walked to the Amtrak station at the end of my street. About 9:10, 15mins late, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 449, pulled in, and I boarded as about a dozen NARP members saw me off. I grabbed a seat in the first of three coaches, one of the new 4000-series handicapped cars of Amtrak's Heritage Fleet, stowed my bags, and retreated to the Amdinette with Conrail Conductor and Brakeman Dennis Anderson and Bob Conners. There, over a round of Coca-Colas, we discussed Amtrak's never-ending problems for the duration of the uneventful ride to Albany-Rensselaer, which we reached at 10:05, about five minutes early.

I bade farewell to the crew departing here and retired to the coach which promptly went dark after the engine and Amdinette were disconnected. The three Boston coaches, sleeper, deadhead lounge and baggage mail car sat on a yard track awaiting arrival of #49, the New York section.

At 10:20pm, about eight minutes late, it arrived, consisting of two F40PH engines, baggage-dorm, slumbercoach, sleeper, four coaches, lounge, diner, and local Amcoach. There was no apparent hurry as the switcher removed the last coach, attached to the Boston section and attached us to the New York section, then pulled off with the local Amcoach. Head end power was restored and brake test completed, so we departed at 10:55pm, 23mins late.

Ever since the April schedule change caused the westbound LAKE SHORE to depart a half-hour later, the diner does not serve supper west of Rensselaer, so one is wise to dine before departure. The coach lights have been extinguished early, so I recline the double seats, prop the leg rests up on the foot rests, and stretch out diagonally in the improvised bed. This is nearly as good as a slumber-coach or roomette for one night's travel at a substantial cost savings.

I drift on and off into sleep, usually awakening at stations to note times. Gradually we make up time across New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, until we're 13mins late out of Cleveland at 7:59am. The engineers aren't setting any speed records on this run. I decide to go up to the diner for breakfast for the last of two pre-modified meals. I had received a call the afternoon before from Amtrak's Director of Passenger Service, Peter Welsh, wishing me a nice trip and apologizing in advance for the use of paper plates on this run, as the dishwasher in diner 8503 was broken. I'm puzzled, as on Oct 11 all trains would switch from china and linen to plastic and paper anyway, but appreciate his concern.

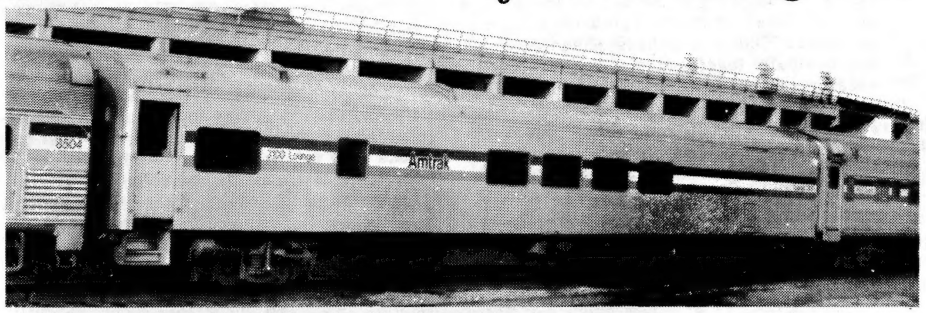
Breakfast is fine: corned beef hash, scrambled eggs, English muffins, tomato juice and milk. As we pause at Elyria, I notice the white vinyl siding of the station is quite dirty and I write a note to remind Ohio ARP people that it would be a nice gesture on their part to get together and wash it as I had done the vinyl siding on my house before I left.

By Sandusky we're only two minutes late, but lose more time outside Toledo before crossing the bridge into the station. The Detroit connecting train is now Amfleet and sits on the left hand side of the LAKE SHORE.

I stretch my legs on the platform, as there is a service stop here. Workmen water the cars and we depart at 10:42am, 10mins late. I'm impressed by the little shelter at Bryan, Ohio. One person departs to connect with a bus to Fort Wayne, Indiana. The shelter is concrete blocks, painted white, with a large glass area in front, a huge filled timetable rack, and an excellent concrete platform.

We're just about on time at Elkhart, which possesses a nice old ex-New Y ork Central station downtown that appears to be intermodal, as I spot a Greyhound sign on the east side of the depot. Here I enter the diner for lunch which I must treat as reverently as the last supper, as all my meals after that shall be "modified by the dictates of Congress." Not being especially hungry, I choose a turkey sandwich with real fresh turkey, iced tea with real lemon wedges, and topped off with a chocolate sundae as rumor has it that Amtrak will serve no more ice cream.

I relish the meal into South Bend, running thru the decrepit but downtown-located ex-NYC station and stopping in the suburbs at the Chicago, South Shore and South Bend interurban station. Amtrak, CSSSB, and Indiana should really get together and extend the interurban to downtown South Bend, rehabilitate the old station, or build a new intermodal facility there. Notre Dame must certainly be enough of a traffic generator to justify the project. The run from here to Chicago is a fast one and we arrive at Union Station 20mins early, leaving nearly a 5-hour layover for the next leg of my trip, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR.



Heritage Fleet lounge 3100 on the LAKE SHORE, a car similar to those ridden by Mr. Gregoire in his transcontinental trip. Photo by Jack Ferry.

After an interesting afternoon of wandering around Chicago taking pictures of Superliner equipment in the Amtrak coach yards, I return to the Amtrak lounge to await boarding of train 5. I'm booked in economy bedroom #6 in car 531, the first Superliner sleeper behind the transition dormitory car.

When boarding is announced I walk the full length of the train to my car. I have waived my own personal rule of coach-only travel for this trip since it involves more than one night in each direction, plus I'm anxious to try the Superliner sleepers. The consist of the train is two F40PH engines, two baggage mail cars, transition-dormitory car, two Oakland sleepers, diner, lounge-cafe, Oakland coach-baggage car, Oakland coach, Portland coach, Los Angeles coach, Los Angeles sleeper. The rear cars run thru on the PIONEER and DESERT WIND at Ogden respectively.

The sleeping car attendant checks me off the manifest and I go upstairs to settle down in room 6, tastefully furnished in a bright red decor. Altho I've seen the tall cars at our last NARP Board meeting in Washington last April during Family Days, this is my first ride in one. I flip switches and dials, turning down the temperature as cool as possible for sleeping late.

We depart at 6:53pm (3mins late) as I watch the Chicago skyline slip by (possible now due to daylighing platforms at Union Station for office building construction). After my ticket is collected I ask the porter to ready my bed as after supper I'll retire early, since I had little sleep the night before and am tired from walking around Chicago.

The dining service offered on the ZEPHYR I'll refer to (as agreed to by some of the Directors later) as "Modified Dining Service II" to distinguish it from "Modified Dining Service I" offered originally on the BROADWAY, CRESCENT and SOUTHWEST LIMITED. As previously described in RTN, five selections constitute the basic dinner menu: beef, chicken, fish, spaghetti and chow mein. I choose the barbecued short ribs of beef with mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, lettuce and tomato salad, butterscotch pudding and milk. I find it hot, tender and appetizing, probably in part because I'm very hungry at this point. It's similar to, altho in quantity greater than the identical dinner served on the Boston section of the LAKE SHORE's lounge car this summer.

After dinner I visit the lounge for a few minutes before retiring to my room. I'm vaguely aware of crossing the Mississippi, curving sharply at the west end of the bridge,

We at Amtrak are glad to have you with us today, and hope you have a pleasant trip.

Dining car service is a feature of this train, and offers wholesome, reasonably priced meals for the entire family. Today's service, however, is a departure from the traditional dining car. Recent Congressional legislation has mandated that Amtrak reduce financial losses resulting from food operations. As a first step, we have introduced a new dining car service that retains high food quality, yet is more efficient and cost effective.

and the entire length of the stainless steel equipment being brightly illuminated, a dramatic sight, but then I'm asleep until about McCook, Nebraska, where we depart on time.

I head back for breakfast as we race across the flat farmlands. The Burlington Northern track is rough, and the jointed rail is accentuating the bouncing at the second level of the bi-level cars. Still it's a pleasant meal in the diner. There is a three-selection breakfast basically (eggs and sausage, pancakes and sausage, or cereal) from which I choose the first selection. It comes with orange juice, scrambled eggs (only), a sausage patty, a blueberry muffin, and milk.

I return to my room, now made up for day use and enjoy a fast run into Denver plus a slow backup move into the station. This, along with use of the Borie cutoff at Cheyenne, allows us to avoid engine reversal and running backwards north of Denver. Denver is a long service stop, so I get off to explore the station and walk the length of the train on both sides. Because of dual platforms (one on each side of the train), the passengers can enter or leave the train on the station side and the servicing of the train (water, fuel, baggage, mail) can occur on the opposite side with no interference.

On the platform I meet Washington DC attorney and NARP Director John Heffner, who has just flown into Denver from Washington and has a downstairs bedroom in my car. At the same time, NARP Director Larry Joyce and his wife appear (they've been on since Chicago) and NARP Director George McCallum (also on since Chicago). Our little group will enjoy most of the trip together from here on.

Leaving Denver on time, we head for the diner to sample a three-selection lunch menu (basically hamburger, roast beef, or chicken sandwich--the latter two including soup). I order hamburger, which is grilled, not micro-waved, and which I find rather good.

Most of us retire to the lounge-cafe to see the views climbing the mountains. This is a land of desolate beauty with rocky, snow-capped peaks in the clear distance. We pass the Cheyenne cutoff and stop at Borie station, which appears unused as passengers wait in a chartered Greyhound which will take passengers back into town also. Near Laramie we pass eastbound train 6 being helped along by a bright yellow Union Pacific freight engine in front of its platinum mist F40's. With the exception of some platform walks for fresh air at a couple of longer stops, we spend most of our time in the glass-topped lounge cafe, drinking in not spirits but the remarkable scenery of the great West until darkness sets in at Rock Springs.

At dinner some of us decide to detrain at Ogden to watch the car shuffle with Howard Cannon's and Bob Packwood's favorite trains. Altho I wake up at Ogden, a heavy downpour prevents me from observing much except thru my bedroom window.

I'm awake by Sparks, Nevada, so I get out for a refreshing morning walk before breakfast while the train is serviced. This stop, so close to Reno, must make Reno passengers a little impatient--much like Collingwood outside Cleveland on the LAKE SHORE in the pre-HEP days for watering the E units. It's off to Reno where we discharge passengers in the Casino District. Tall hotels have popped out of the desert for no apparent reason.

Soon we're off and after a quick breakfast it's into the lounge car to enjoy the most spectacular scenery of the trip. At first it looks as if fog and clouds will obscure our descent, but it rapidly clears and we're treated to hours of fantastic scenery, including Donner Pass, multiple snowsheds and tunnels, an all-natural multi-media panorama from the most spectacular viewing car in Amtrak's active inventory. After lunch at Sacramento, it's a fast run to the Pacific Ocean for a half hour early arrival at Oakland.

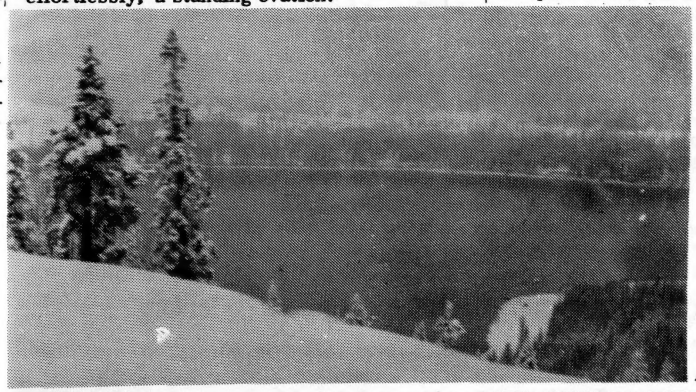
* * *

Three days later a group of us are waiting to board train 6 at Suisun-Fairfield, after a most enjoyable Board of Directors meeting which included speeches by Amtrak VP Bill Norman of Marketing, Caltrans Director Adriana Gianturco, Prof. Ron Sheck with his Amtrak plan for profitability by 1990, a street car party on the San Francisco Muni Railway, numerous BART and cable car rides, a visit to Amtrak's Art Lloyd's home via the Caltrans/SP commute rail line, and capped off with a visit to the California Railway Museum at Rio Vista. Directors Bob Glover and John Kirkwood deserve a commendation for hosting an excellent meeting. NARP President Jack Martin of Atlanta is on the platform in Suisun-Fairfield to see us off.

About five minutes early, train 6 roars into the station, its equipment the same basic arrangement as on #5 described earlier, minus two L.A. cars and one Portland car. Our sleeper is closed, so we must board at a coach and walk forward. No one is expecting us as our tickets show us boarding at Oakland. The conductor, relieved all his Oakland "no shows" finally showed, takes our tickets, and I stow luggage in economy bedroom 5 of car 630 and head for lunch to be prepared for the upcoming spectacular scenery later in the lounge.

On the return trip we have NARP Directors Jeff English of Troy NY, Nancy Ross of Kalamazoo MI, Henry Fern of Wiscasset ME, Travis Buyess of St. Louis MO, Larry Joyce and his wife, plus George McCallum (both of whom rode west with us), and members Al Maladeno, a travel agent, and Mark Adamcik, both of Cleveland.

After we leave Sacramento, most of us are in the lounge, and we notice the sky becoming cloudy to the east. Will this ruin our picture-taking? Soon a light mist begins falling, and by Colfax a heavy rain is pounding the windows of the Superliner lounge's roof. As we climb from sea level on the coast to over 7000 feet by Donner Pass, a meteorologist friend of mine would have described conditions as "deteriorating rapidly." We observe a few snowflakes in the rain, which rapidly becomes all wet heavy snow as we climb. The ground outside is now white, and snow sticks to the trees getting deeper as we climb higher. Interstate 80 which we parallel most of the way has become impassable, with cars and trucks stopped dead on slight grades. At one massive tie-up, everyone in the lounge gets up and gives the train, which is moving thru the storm effortlessly, a standing ovation.



A snowy Sierra scene from a wondow of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. RTN photo.

The train is even more spectacular moving thru curves, tunnels and snowsheds in the near-blizzard as we look down at Donner Lake. It's growing darker by Truckee, dark by Reno, so we see the bright lights of the Casino City.

After a platform walk at Sparks, it's into the diner to try the chicken dinner, which is basically a chicken pot pie nicely served in a freshly baked light pastry shell. It's still pudding for dessert but this time vanilla, after butterscotch and chocolate westbound.

After retiring, I hope to be able to see the shuffle at Ogden from the platform in early morning. However, at Ogden we are cursed with bad weather again. It appears to have snowed during the night, and it has turned into hail which now beats on the stainless steel roof of the sleeper like a hail of bullets. I pass up a platform walk, but am reassured (I think) by the sight of a switcher with three cars (supposedly) from our two connecting trains, the PIONEER and DESERT WIND. However, 7:20am departure time comes and we're still in the station.

I move forward to the diner for breakfast and find out altho Senator Packwood's train was on time, Senator Cannon's train never made it. Due to a freight derailment, the DESERT WIND was annulled at Las Vegas, passengers sent by bus, and one bus (a local) hasn't showed, so we're waiting. The phantom cars are from the previous night's westbound train that was annulled and passengers sent to Las Vegas by bus.

Finally a bus show up, passengers and baggage board, and we're out an hour late into now pouring rain. We race across Wyoming as things brighten up and the sun comes out. Unfortunately, by now the lounge windows are dirty, but scenery we passed at night westbound is now in daylight.

By Cheyenne (Borie) we're only a half-hour late and race down to Denver, entering the station forwards in this direction. It's time for a stroll around the train before dinner. I notice the two Los Angeles cars badly in need of a washing, not having the benefit of a bath at their western terminus point. I bid farewell to Travis Burgess at this point, who has opted to depart here, bus to La Junta, catch the SOUTHWEST LIMITED to Kansas City, then the ANN RUTLEDGE to St. Louis.

After dinner I retire to the bedroom and watch a spectacular lightning show in the north-west sky before crossing the Nebraska line. I wake up at Ottumwa, Iowa, about 5mins late and have a late light breakfast of cereal as Henry Fern, Al Maladeno and I plan to explore Chicago on foot and eat a big "non-modified" meal in that city for midday dining. The run into Chicago is uneventful, arriving only 10min late due to a lot of Burlington Northern track work.

After a quick shave, I stash my bags, and then Al, Henry and I are off to explore Chicago. Al, a Cleveland travel agent, gives us an excellent foot tour, we have a fine turkey dinner, then head back to the LAKE SHORE at Union Station. As we enter, they've just announced the LAKE SHORE is boarding and they're announcing Pittsfield as one of a series of destinations. Grabbing baggage, I head for the last coach which is just ahead of the mail car and Boston sleeper. Joannie, the attendant, is surprised to see me in Chicago instead of Pittsfield, so we chat about various Amtrak items of interest before boarding.

We're off on time. The first indication that this would not be a routine trip was a blue Conrail freight engine lumbering by my north-facing window west of South Bend. This is not unusual except that it was towing two F40PH's painted platinum blue plus the

westbound LAKE SHORE LIMITED! Was this a sign of things to come? Perhaps not, I thought as we arrived early at South Bend and Elkhart, as I noted the ex-New York Central cars making up the railroad theme restaurant on the south side of the tracks.

Around Bryan, Henry Fern and I decide to try the diner and its "Modified Dining Service III." The menu is a mix of MDS-I and MDS-II with lasagna added (five entrees for dinner). I order lasagna and Henry baked chicken breast. My lasagna is equal to that I had in a San Francisco hotel at half the cost, so I'm pleased. The apple pie for dessert is piping hot but regrettably there is no ice cream (one solution would be to rush off at Toledo, buy a cup of ice cream at the soda fountain in the station and pour it on the pie!).

At Toledo we walk the train, finding the standard consist: two F40PH's, baggage dorm, slumbercoach, sleeper, 3 coaches, cafeteria lounge, diner (all for New York), followed by 2 coaches, sleeper and mail car (all for Boston). We're out on time and continue across Ohio in the night to Cleveland, being early at Sandusky and Elyria. At Cleveland I bid Mark and Al farewell and we depart on time before stopping dead west of Collingwood yard for the next three hours!

brightness in the excavation scene of the movie "2001". We slowed down to about 5mph and passed within 50 feet of the Conrail wreck brightly illiminated by the portable light towers of Hulcher Emergency Railroad Services of Mercer PA. I thought of the many unemployment claims I processed for that company when they were headquartered in West Stockbridge MA. It was a spectacular pileup blocking both tracks for a quarter mile, cars strewn every which way. It was worth losing sleep to see, but it was 4am. I was due back to work that morning, so I retired to the coach to catch some sleep.

I slept so late I missed breakfast. I learned that Henry Fern had bailed out at Buffalo, opting to fly to Boston from there. We maintained our lateness to Albany-Rensselaer, where, fully awake, I proceeded to the office of Amtrak Passenger Service Director Peter Welsh to officially complain about Conrail's shoddy treatment of my favorite train. I explained that there was no reason to hold us three hours near Cleveland when obviously neither trail van train had entered or was anywhere near entering a 45-min stretch of detour track. He listened attentively, gave me a tour of the new Rensselaer station due to open the next day, inquired about the new

WELCOME ABOARD AMTRAK'S HERITAGE FLEET

Amtrak

Of course there is no announcement, so I have to seek out the crew and piece together a story. It turns out to be a disastrous day for Amtrak and Conrail. First the westbound LAKE SHORE had an engine failure at Buffalo causing passengers to be sent by bus when the train was annulled (we had passed that deadhead equipment earlier being towed by a Conrail unit). Afterwards, 22 cars of a Conrail freight had derailed west of Conneaut station near the Pennsylvania line, blocking both tracks of the Conrail east-west main. We were being detoured over the old Nickel Plate part of Norfolk and Western from east of Cleveland to east of Conneaut. We were now waiting for two westbound Conrail trail van trains to clear the single track detour before we headed east.

I figured at worst an hour which we'd easily make up due to pad time in the schedule. But it was two hours before the first trail van passed us, another hour for the second, then off to the branch line detour about 3:00am (we should have been in Buffalo). In order not to miss this section of track, I opened up the two Dutch doors and rode the vestibule (there was no opposition to doing so at this hour!).

We appeared to head south, then east, then north, then east again until we paralleled the ex-NYC main line. I stood in the north vestibule Dutch door. Up ahead were bright lights in a scene roughly reminiscent of the stark

food service, promised paper tablecloths and artificial flowers, and we parted so I could catch train 448 for the final leg of my trip.

We flew up the Post Road branch and I enjoyed a lunch of 7-Up and coffee cake with the crew as we discussed the night's happenings in the Amdinette. We arrived at Pittsfield at 1:30pm (over 3 hours late) and I left the train, walking up the hill to my office to work.

In short, I can summarize the transcontinental journey as near-perfect if one excludes the 3-hour lateness near the eastern end. This however had some distinct advantages such as covering new railroad freight-only trackage one would probably never have a chance to ride in a lifetime, seeing a spectacular nighttime freight car pileup, traversing western upstate New York in daylight during fall foliage season.

The new food service can best be described as not as bad as earlier reports in RTN had led one to believe, but certainly not as elegant as the past. However, Amtrak started at the bottom and is continuing to improve it as time goes on. By mid-November we're promised a further upgrading with "Modified Dining Service IV". Under the Reagan Administration our main problem will probably be continuing to fight to save trains so we must remember food service is easier to upgrade than it is to try to replace lost trains. The struggle continues.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THANKSGIVING DAY WEEKEND is one of the heaviest travel times of the year. Amtrak said that historically the Sunday following Thanksgiving (which would be Sunday, Nov 29 this year) is the single heaviest day for Amtrak travel in the year. Of course, Amtrak had "all available equipment" out on the rails in preparation for the crush of travelers. At last word, on Nov 24, before Thanksgiving Day, there were 1000 standees counted systemwide on Amtrak trains. It's not usually that heavy on that date, Amtrak said. Amtrak evidently had a near-perfect on-time performance record in the Northeast Corridor on the 24th, marred only by the northbound COLONIAL which developed engine trouble and was running over an hour late. Airline travel was reported going smoothly in spite of the continuing shortage of air traffic controllers. Amtrak reports generally heavy business and seems at a loss to explain the high demand for rail service--in the face of recessionary conditions and continued low prices for gasoline (the price of gas hasn't changed much in the last few months, tho it's over 12% higher nationwide than it was a year ago; the current glut of gasoline is expected to decrease in a few months, and then prices will rise more).....

★ ★ ★

AMTRAK'S "ARROW" RESERVATIONS COMPUTER, which began operation Nov 1, has been subject to more problems than were anticipated. The problems are in the software --i.e., the programming of it--rather than in the physical system itself. Just before Thanksgiving an Amtrak spokesman admitted to RTN that the corporation is losing 94% of its calls for reservations and information! Only six percent are currently being handled because the computer is "down" so much while programmers work on the problems. Ironically, during this snafu time, calls to Amtrak are also up "markedly." One of the main problems with the present programming is that some reservations, especially those made earlier when the previous computer was being used, become lost, and so spaces are double-sold inadvertently. Only two percent of total reservations are affected by this problem, Amtrak claimed. But travel agents and ticket sellers are finding great difficulty in getting thru to the computer and in getting their reservations properly made if they do get thru. When one calls an Amtrak reservations number, a recorded message tells of the new computer system and (by implication) of the problems being encountered. Amtrak said on Nov 24 that it hopes to have the bugs out of the system "within a week or so". Amtrak's main computer is located in Philadelphia.....

★ ★ ★

THE BUDGET HASSLE in Washington has left Amtrak with no money since the start of the fiscal year Oct 1. It doesn't know exactly how much money it will get, and so it can't make firm commitments for spending. Dec 15 is D-Day for the budget, as the continuing resolution runs out then, and the final budget should be decided by then (see also news story on page 5). The sad thing about all this for rail travel is reflected in the lament of an Amtrak spokesman: "What we could do with the money if we only had it!" The delay of 2½ months into the fiscal year (not to mention the possibility of further cuts) means just that much more delay in getting our unbalanced transportation system shaped up, while other nations move quickly forward into world leadership in passenger rail technology.....

CHICAGO RESERVATIONS BUREAU will have a formal open house with ribbon-cutting ceremony on Dec 3. The office, at 55 Eastman Row, has actually be in operation about six months. Amtrak's Assistant VP-Marketing will be there for the occasion...

NO SPECIAL ROSE BOWL train will be run this year, evidently, but cars will undoubtedly be added to regular trains for those journeying to the New Year's game.....

THE COAST STARLIGHT, blocked by a bridge out on the SP south of Dunsmuir CA--a pier on a truss bridge was crumbling at milepost 304 15 miles south of Dunsmuir--was detoured thru the Western Pacific's Feather River Canyon line beginning with both north and southbound trains on Nov 19. The southbound train on Nov 27 was believed to be the first to return to the regular line. The detour ran between Sacramento and Klamath Falls on the WP and BN and added several hours to the running time. On another COAST STARLIGHT topic, an Amtrak spokesman said that a decision from the arbitration panel on the re-routing of the train thru Sacramento is expected by Dec 10.....

RENO FUN TRAIN will operate again this season. After last year's season, it was generally believed that the train would not run again. But departures from Oakland will begin on Jan 29, with the train operating for 13 weekends thru Apr 30. Superliner cars will be used.....

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THE OVERNIGHT TRAIN between Los Angeles and Sacramento is doing "extremely well" in patronage, and a second sleeper has been added. It is sold out for most upcoming days. Amtrak said a third sleeper, if available, would be useful for it. Coach patronage has been in the 80's to 100's per train.....

SEVERE WINTER WEATHER has been hitting the Midwest. Amtrak said that there have been no big problems with timekeeping, however. On Monday Nov 23 there was an ice storm in St. Paul MN, but the EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8, was only 10mins late. The train was described as "packed" with passengers.....

THE STATE HOUSE, train 301, suffered a bomb scare on Nov 21. A male passenger threatened the conductor with a bottle of liquid which he said was nitroglycerine. This happened between Joliet and Pontiac IL. State police were called and met the train at Pontiac, where the passenger was removed and the train evacuated temporarily. The train was delayed 21mins.....

THE SACRAMENTO BEE published a series of four articles this month about travel from that capitol city to the Bay Area by different travel modes. The idea was to get to San Francisco in time for a midday appointment. The writer who took the train had to use the SAN JOAQUIN from Stockton, with the bus connection from Sacramento. His total time was 5hrs, 22mins, and it cost him $17.40, including local transit fares. Altho his time was the slowest of all, he said he "probably had the most variety and fun". He said his trip emphasizes the need for a local train to accomplish such a trip.....

★ ★ ★

THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE on Nov 9 editorialized in favor of a high-speed passenger train route for the Texas Triangle corridor of Houston-San Antonio-Dallas. It noted the Japan-U.S. Rail Congress recently formed (see last issue) as a way of "making progress." Noted the paper, "Restoring train travel as a major form of transportation is not only economically sound but psychologically rewarding. Americans have long been fascinated by train travel. It's in their folklore and music. Maybe with high-speed trains, romanticism and reality can be reconciled".....

AUTO-TRAIN CORPORATION'S remaining assets--tools and materials at its Sanford FL car repair facility--will be sold at auction there on Dec 8. The date is just 10 years and 2 days from the date of the first run of Auto-Train (see RTN #26). The facility itself has been purchased by the Seminole Employment and Economic Development Corp., which plans to rehire Auto-Train workers who were previously there. The revival of an Auto-Train type service on the East Coast is reportedly progressing with no stumbling blocks encountered. The group of revivalists, including Washington attorney Carl Shipley, talks of leasing cars from Amtrak for the service. They may seek to sell stock in the enterprise in the near future, and so cannot reveal many details of their plan yet, reports the Washington Post.....

FRENCH NATIONAL RAILWAYS advertises its new TGV, the world's fastest train, in two-page color magazine ads that picture a car interior as well as an exterior view of an entire train. Reads the ad, in translation: "On the TGV all passengers are seated. Reservations up to 5 minutes before departure." And, tying in the fast TGV with its automobiles, Renault/American Motors advertises in U.S. publications its cars alongside a photo of the TGV. ("When there is a car from a country that just built the world's fastest train...") Take note: fast trains are good for business and a nation's morale. For aircraft fanciers there is a similar ad featuring the French Concorde.....

CITY OF PICAYUNE Mississippi this month had a meeting of its Downtown Revitalization Committee, and among other matters it discussed making the city a stop on the route of Amtrak's CITY OF NEW ORLEANS and of eventually having commuter trains to New Orleans on the line.....

CITY OF NORMAL, Illinois will become an Amtrak stop for trains 304 and 21 at an unspecified date, with stops made on Fridays and Sundays only (and Mondays when a holiday falls on that day). Years and long negotiations went into the planning of this...

SIX RAILROAD UNIONS reached a tentative agreement for a 39-month contract with the railroads on Nov 10. Ratification by union members is expected.....

THE MILWAUKEE ROAD, in bankruptcy, and the Grant Trunk Western have agreed to talk about a possible merger of the two railroads, which would form a 5000-mile system around the U.S. side of the Great Lakes.....

AMTRAK'S ACCOUNTING FIRM, Arthur Andersen and Co., had an $80 million court verdict returned against it early in November in a fraud case not involving Amtrak...

INTERNATIONAL RAIL LINE is being considered between Yuma County, Arizona and San Luis in Mexico.....

SOME DETROIT TRAINS have padded schedules, reports a recent rider. Trains 350 and 355 were both found running well ahead of schedule, with waits for time at most stops, and early arrival at both ends of the line (15mins early into Chicago). The schedules could probably be tightened up by 20-25mins, he notes. The addition of 5mins to eastbound schedules recently between Detroit and Dearborn is to turn the trains, necessary since Turboliners are no longer used. The trains turn at Scotten, at milepost 2.5 from Detroit.....

RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR was the subject of a front-page article by Brenton R. Schlender in the Wall Street Journal Nov 20. The author notes that the railroad is losing $3 million a year on the train and would drop it if the ICC would permit it.....

STATE OF WISCONSIN plans to end its $850,000 annual subsidy of Lake Michigan rail car barge ferries on Mar 31. The state of Michigan subsidizes them for an equal amount, but has no plans to discontinue the funding.....

ANN ARBOR RAILROAD was the scene of a run by U.S. DOT test car D-10 this fall. Local residents saw it and thought it meant the long-delayed (by the ICC) startup of the Magner-O'Hara Scenic Railway had occurred. The railroad was flooded with calls from across the Midwest asking about schedule and ticket information.....

STATE OF MICHIGAN is looking hard for places to cut its transportation budget. The Amtrak BLUE WATER may be on shaky ground, and the planned Grand Rapids train may never see the light of day.....

* * *

ADVANCED PASSENGER TRAIN in England is two years behind schedule because of technical problems, but one set is expected to start regular service on Jan 11.....

THE PULLMAN COMPANY "could become a major enterprise in the transportation industry" said its parent company Wheelabrator-Frye Inc. this month. To help that eventuality along, the parent will form a new company in late January--Pullman Transportation Co.--to make the car builder financially separate from the parent company that purchased it about ayear ago. Recall last issue's quote about the builder's possibly staying in the passenger car building field.....

THE LOUISIANA ASSOCIATION of RR Passengers asks people interested in restoration of Jacksonville-New Orleans passenger service to write Gov. William Winter, State Capitol, 400 High St, Jackson MS 39202. Mississippi and Louisiana have a joint Rapid Transit Compact which is now awaiting approval by the U.S. Congress.....

BUMPER STICKERS READING " Bring back the CARDINAL" can be obtained for a $2.50 donation to: OARP "TRAIN #51 FUND", PO Box 653, Xenia OH 45385.....

ALABAMA RAIL SUPPORTER J. W. McFarland is interested in forming an Association of RR Passengers in his state. He can be contacted at PO Box 5355, Tuscaloosa AL 35405.....

THE SOUTHERN PACIFIC on Nov 13 said it will ask the ICC to let it abandon its 36-mile Altamont Line between Niles and Tracy CA and to operate trains instead over the adjacent Western Pacific.....

News in this issue is updated thru Nov 29, 1981.

LETTERS (continued from page 3)

"Unfortunately, the Amtrak startup ten years ago only served to make this disparity public policy. What was previously good fortune for some--based on the relative prosperity of the area's freight railroads--became a net channeling of public funds from the off-Corridor Northeast, the Midwest, the South, and the West Coast to support the 'Desert' operations. On a basis of train miles per capita before the current cuts, Wyoming enjoyed 18 times as much Amtrak service as Ohio; Montana, four times as much as Texas. Now the disparity is even greater.

"This is not to say that the EMPIRE BUILDER should operate only once or twice a week to effect a balance. Indeed, most agree that a minimum of once-daily service should be given everywhere.")

RAIL FANTRIPS

One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. No listings were received for this issue.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Passenger trains are like babies: sooner or later you have to name them."
--Keith Love in Los Angeles Times, Oct 27, covering inaugural of unnamed overnight train.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"The (Rio Grande) Zephyr is a rolling museum of the post-World War II heyday of passenger trains. Patrons ride in the same quaint, though drafty, art-deco coaches put into service 33 years ago when the Zephyr chugged all the way to San Francisco. Inside are the original, overstuffed seats, a garish combination of green and yellow. On the outside, the aluminum coaches--four of them named the Silver Sky, Silver Pony, Silver Colt and Silver Bronco--still glisten."
--Brenton R. Schlender in Wall Street Journal , Nov 20.

(As if they'd just rolled off the Alcoa assembly line.)

"On September 27, 1981, the French National Railways (SNCF) began a passenger service between Paris and Lyon, 264 miles, which bids fair to vindicate Linn and the skeptics. It is called the TGV--for très grande vitesse, French for high-speed train." --Trains magazine, Dec.

(You're getting closer. How about "Very High Speed?")

CARS & CONSISTS

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 449, Pittsfield MA Oct 5: engine 202; cars 28303 Amdinette/lounge, 4002, 4003, 4619 coaches, 2903 sleeper, 3123 cafeteria-lounge deadhead, 1218 bag-mail (last 6 cars on to #49 at Albany). Train 49, Albany-Rensselaer Oct 5: engines 344, 337, (487 FL9 off at Albany); cars 1619 bag-dorm, 2051 slumbercoach, 2442 slpr, 4604, 4636, 4607, 4613 coaches, 3105 cafeteria-lounge, 8503 diner, local coach 21166 off at Albany. (Consists of Kevin Gregoire's trains--see his article this issue.)

*EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS, train 74, Syracuse Nov 10: Turboliners 152 power coach, 190 coach, 183 cafe/coach, 153 power car/custom class.

*MAPLE LEAF, train 63, Syracuse Nov 10: engine 339; cars 20207 Amdinette, 21111 & 21135 Amcoaches, 1370 baggage. Train 64, same: engine 352; cars 21029 Amcoach, 20218 Amdinette, 21002 Amcoach, 1373 baggage.

*MOHAWK, train 65, Syracuse Nov 10: Turboliners 162 power coach, 174 Turbo-cafe, 188 coach, 156 power coach.

*Unnamed Overnight Train, train 15, Los Angeles Nov 14: engine 283; cars 1139 baggage, 2984 "Pine Cavern", 20225 Amdinette, 60-seat legrest Amcoaches 21804, 21851 (arrived 15mins early).

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 3, Kansas City Nov 15: engines 290, 287; cars 1210 & 1151 bag, Hi-level 39913, Superliners 31039, 34101, Hi-level lounge 39970, Superliner diner 38013, Superliner slprs 32021, 32051, ATSF business car 51 Topeka-L.A. Train 4, same, Nov 17: engines 293, 235; cars 1221 & 1252 baggage, Hi-level 39929, Superliners 31009, 34059, Hi-level lounge 39975, Superliner diner Superliner slprs 32059, 32046, deadhead buffer car 39921, private car 3 "Chapel Hill."

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 14, Oakland Oct 25: engines 372 (on at Oakland), 216, 284; cars 1213, Hi-level 39904, Superliners 31041, 34080, 34036, 33014, 38023, 32041, 32053.

*NORTH STAR, train 10, St. Paul Oct 26: engine 306; cars Superliners 34068, 38000, 31017 (equipment went to Chicago Oct 27 as EMPIRE BUILDER, train 8).

*EMPIRE BUILDER, train 7, St. Paul Oct 26: engine 336; cars Superliners 31011, 38033, 34033 (equipment went to Duluth Oct 27 as NORTH STAR, train 9). Train 10, same, Oct 29: engines 373, 366, 357; cars 1171 "Silver Coyote" baggage, Hi-level 39926, Superliners 32003, 34053, 34041, 38013, 33008, 34051, 31013, 32023, 31036, 34084, 34008 (last 3 cars plus engine 373 came deadheaded from Chicago and were dropped off in St. Paul for Duluth service; baggage, Hi-level, slpr, 2 coaches & diner go to Seattle; lounge, coach-baggage & slpr go to Portland).

*ATLANTIC, VIA train 11, Moncton Sep 6: engines 6772, 6870, 6864; cars 9627, 5631, 5580, 5541, 5649, 760, 5726, 5447, 1168 "Greenshields", 1194 "Greenhurst", 1363, 1082 "Cape Rosier", 14327 "Fraser Manor", 2101 "Kakabeka Falls", 2084 "Riviere Raquette".

*Egyptian Railways train 86, Aswan-Luxor-Cairo, Nov 5: engine 356; generator car 4148, sleepers 1179 (12-bdrm), 1165, 1178, bar car 1128, sleepers 1194, 1171, 1188, 1196, generator car number unknown.

*Amtrak diner 8034 has been acquired by Pacific Southwest RR Museum this month.

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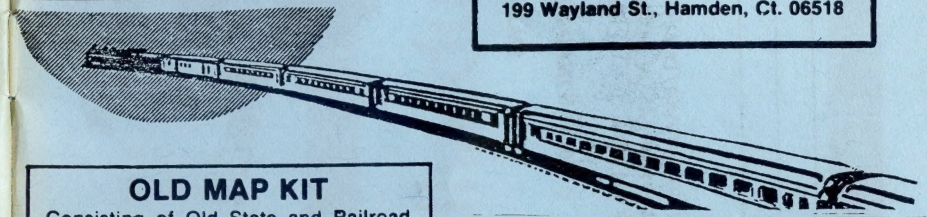

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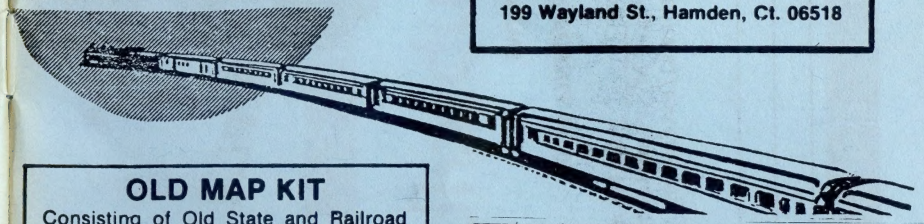

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